

REMARKS

Claims 8, 10-14, 20-21 and 23-31 are now pending in the application. Claims 8 and 20 have been amended, claim 9 has been canceled and claim 31 is new. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein. All claims as amended or pending are believed to be in condition for allowance.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 8-9, 11, and 13-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by USPN 5,247,429 to Iwase et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 8

The Applicants have amended claim 8 to include the limitations of claim 9 and additional subject matter that further defines their invention over the cited art. Subject matter added to claim 8 now includes:

“wherein the dot pattern includes a plurality of spatially separated dots such that along a direction outwardly from the outer boundary area of the first layer, spatial separation between the dots gradually increases and heights of the dots of the dot pattern gradually decrease and cause a sloped outer layer. ”

The Applicants respectfully contend that Iwase '429 does not disclose Applicants' claim 8 but respectfully note that Iwase '429 does disclose, in at least Figure 3, a structure that utilizes ink layers 31, 32 and ink dots 21. Generally, the ink layers 31, 32 and ink dots 21 of Iwase '429 are used to adjust illuminance to a viewer using an ink layer 31 dispersed around the dots 21. Continuing, Iwase '429 does not disclose a

structure for eliminating visible step lines of an appliqué in accordance with the elements of Applicants' claim 8 as Iwase '429 does not depict nor discuss at least "heights of the dots of the dot pattern gradually decrease and cause a sloped outer layer." This is just one element of Applicants' invention that contributes to elimination of visible step lines. Importantly, Iwase '429 in Figures 3-6 still depicts visible step lines (see layer 32 vis-à-vis layer 31), which is what Applicants' claimed invention has eliminated.

The Applicants now believe claim 8 and all claims depending therefrom to be in condition for allowance.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 10, 20-24, and 25-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over USPN 5,247,429 to Iwase et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 10

In light of the amendment of, and supporting arguments for, claim 8 as detailed above, the Applicants believe claim 10, as it depends from claim 8, to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 20

The Applicants have amended claim 20 that in part, now recites:

“wherein the dot pattern has a spatial separation that gradually increases, while heights of dots of the dot pattern gradually decrease, outwardly from the outer boundary area of the first layer; and

a second layer located against the surface of the planar sheet, wherein at least a portion of the second layer ~~non-uniformly~~ overlays and smoothly conforms to a transition between the planar sheet and a contour of the first layer, thereby forming the viewed component.”

The Applicants respectfully contend that Iwase ‘429 does not disclose, nor render obvious, Applicants’ claim 20 as amended. The Applicants respectfully note that Iwase ‘429 does disclose, in at least Figure 3, a structure that utilizes ink layers 31, 32 and ink dots 21. Generally, the ink layers 31, 32 and ink dots 21 of Iwase ‘429 are used to adjust illuminance to a viewer and involves an ink layer 31 dispersed around the dots 21 and not a structure that smoothly conforms to a transition between the planar sheet and a contour of the first layer Continuing, Iwase ‘429 does not disclose a structure for eliminating visible step lines of an appliqué in accordance with the elements of Applicants’ claim 20 as Iwase ‘429 does not depict nor discuss “heights of dots of the dot pattern gradually decrease.” This is just one structural element of Applicants’ invention that contributes to elimination of visible step lines.

Importantly, Iwase ‘429 in Figures 3-6 still depicts visible step lines (see layer 32 vis-à-vis layer 31), which is what Applicants’ claimed invention has eliminated. The Applicants now believe claims 10, 20-24, and 25-26 to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 25

The Applicants contend that Iwase '429 does not disclose the structure of Applicants' claim 25. Specifically, Iwase '429 does not depict a layer that follows a profile as does Applicants' claim 25.

Claim 26

The Applicants contend that Iwase '429 does not disclose the structure of Applicants' claim 26. Specifically, Iwase '429 does not depict slopes as does Applicants' claim 26.

Specifically regarding the Examiner's comments regarding Iwase and the §103 rejection, the Applicants specifically traverse the Examiner's apparent equivalence of dot density and slope created by dot heights. Dot density refers to the concentration of ink dots per unit area on a surface, which is quite different from their respective heights and still further their arrangement of heights to form a slope. Again, Iwase is concerned with solving lighting problems using dot density while the Applicants' invention addresses visible step lines on the face of an appliqué. While Iwase may adjust the density of ink dots to control illumination, Iwase retains steps (see Figures 3-6) and nowhere discloses all of Applicants' claim 20 elements.

Claims 8-14, 20-21, 23-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over USPN 6,210,776 to Hill in view of USPN 6,663,252 to Fong et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Applicants have amended claims 8 and 20 and provided distinguishing comments for such as detailed above; additionally, the Applicants will provide comment regarding Hill ' 776 and Fong '252.

Claim 8

The Applicants contend that neither Hill '776 nor Fong '252 discloses elements of Applicants' amended claim 8, specifically in part:

“an outer layer printed onto the surface of the planar sheet, wherein at least a portion of the outer layer overlays the underlying layer, wherein the dot pattern includes a plurality of spatially separated dots such that along a direction outwardly from the outer boundary area of the first layer, spatial separation between the dots gradually increases and heights of the dots of the dot pattern gradually decrease and cause a sloped outer layer. “

Hill '776 is generally concerned with the registration or alignment between or of dots of various colors on a substrate (column 1, lines 5-8), and does not disclose structure to eliminate visible step lines on a viewed component. Specifically, Hill '776 does not disclose, at least, the underlined portion of Applicants' amended claim 8 such as, “spatial separation between the dots gradually increases and heights of the dots of the dot pattern gradually decrease and cause a sloped outer layer. “ Therefore, the Applicants contend that Hill ' 776 does not disclose Applicants' claimed structure and that claim 8 and all claims depending therefrom are now in condition for allowance.

Claims 20-21 and 23-30

The Applicants contend that the Examiner has not provided sufficient examination on the merits for claims 20-21 and 23-30 and therefore requests such. More specifically, the Applicants contend that the Examiner has provided broad, general rejections for such claims without citing Applicants' claim elements or relevant locations in the cited references. However, the Applicants are able to comment in accordance with the following:

Claim 20

The Applicants have amended claim 20, in part, in accordance with the following:

"wherein the dot pattern has a spatial separation that gradually increases, while heights of dots of the dot pattern gradually decrease, outwardly from the outer boundary area of the first layer; and

a second layer located against the surface of the planar sheet, wherein at least a portion of the second layer ~~non-uniformly~~ overlays and smoothly conforms to a transition between the planar sheet and a contour of the first layer, thereby forming the viewed component."

In light of such claim 20 amendment, the Applicants contend that neither Hill '776 nor Fong '252 discloses, nor together teach, Applicants' claim 20 structure and now contend that claim 20 and all claims depending therefrom are now in condition for allowance.

Claim 27

The Applicants contend that neither Hill '776 nor Fong '252 discloses, nor together teach, Applicants' claim 27 structure and now contend that claim 27 and all claims depending therefrom are now in condition for allowance. Specifically, the Applicants claim, in part, "wherein the outer boundary area exhibits a sloped profile", which is evidenced in at least Figure 4B.

New Claim 31

Claim 31 is new and further defines the planar sheet of claim 27. Neither Hill '776 nor Fong '252 discloses Applicants' claim 31 structure.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application and pending claims are in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: February 28, 2007

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